

# VFW Applauds Arlington National Cemetery Improvements

## 'The Army said they were going to fix Arlington and they have'

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The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. was critical of the Army when in 2010 it was confirmed that America's most revered national cemetery was failing to do its job. At its 111th national convention in Indianapolis that year, the VFW even passed a national resolution to support transferring Arlington National Cemetery away from the Army and into the Department of Veterans Affairs, which operates 131 national cemeteries across the country.

Not anymore.

"The Army said they were going to fix Arlington and they have," said Richard L. DeNoyer, the national commander of the 2 million-member VFW and its Auxiliaries. "Army Secretary John McHugh and Army National Cemeteries Program Executive Director Kathryn Condon and staff are to be applauded for not only returning Arlington to the hallowed status all of America expects, but for helping to restore the trust and stewardship that those interred and their families deserve."

In the wake of a June 2010 Army Inspector General report that validated mismanagement and misplaced graves, the Army fired senior cemetery management and embraced technology to replace an antiquated 3 x 5-inch card recordkeeping system that Condon said was one fire away from total destruction. Each of the almost 260,000 grave markers have since been digitally photographed, and a new GPS-linked smartphone app due out this fall will help online visitors tour the cemetery from home. The Army also created a geospatial mapping system that allows cemetery staff to synchronize in real-time all their daily operations, to include burials, public ceremonies, and infrastructure upkeep and repair —

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a first for any national cemetery.

“The media, Congress, and veteran and military service organizations have held Army leadership under intense scrutiny over the past two years,” said DeNoyer, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Middleton, Mass. “And while Arlington may still have more challenges to overcome, the Army is getting this right, which the VFW hopes will go far in restoring the public’s full faith in Army’s ability to perform this most sacred mission. Well done.”